



Three decades after the Soviet era, this Moscow street echoes what was.

**And hints where Russia is
heading.**

In the 1970s, this Moscow road was Gorky Street. Today, it's Tverskaya Street. The name is not the only aspect of the boulevard — and life in the Russian capital — that has changed. (Videos by RGAKFD and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

Welcome to Tverskaya Street

By [Robyn Dixon](#), [Isabelle Khurshudyan](#), Mary Ilyushina and Natalia Abbakumova

Oct. 28, 2021

MOSCOW — Thirty years ago, the Soviet Union ceased to be. The flag was lowered for the last time on Dec. 25, 1991. That moment still raises deep questions for the U.S.S.R.'s heirs: “Who were we as Soviets, and where are we going as Russians?”

Many of the answers can be found on Moscow's main thoroughfare — named Gorky Street, after writer Maxim Gorky, from 1932 to 1990, and renamed Tverskaya Street, a nod to the ancient city of Tver, as the Soviet Union was awash in last-gasp reforms.

It was the Soviet Union's display window on the bright future that Kremlin-run communism was supposed to bring. It was where the KGB dined, the rich spent their rubles, Vladimir Lenin gave speeches from a balcony, and authorities wielded their power against one of the most famous Soviet dissidents, Alexander

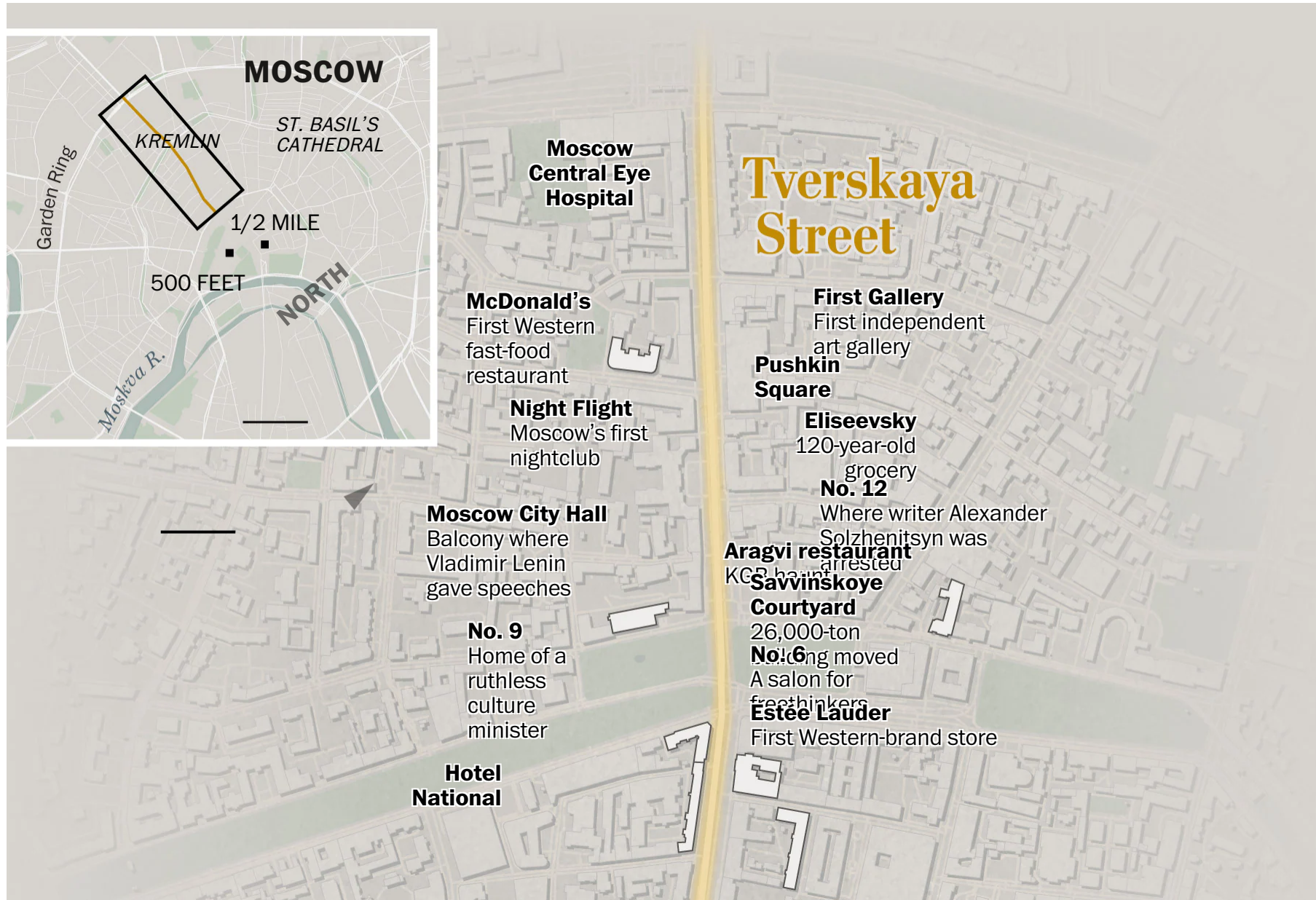
Solzhenitsyn.

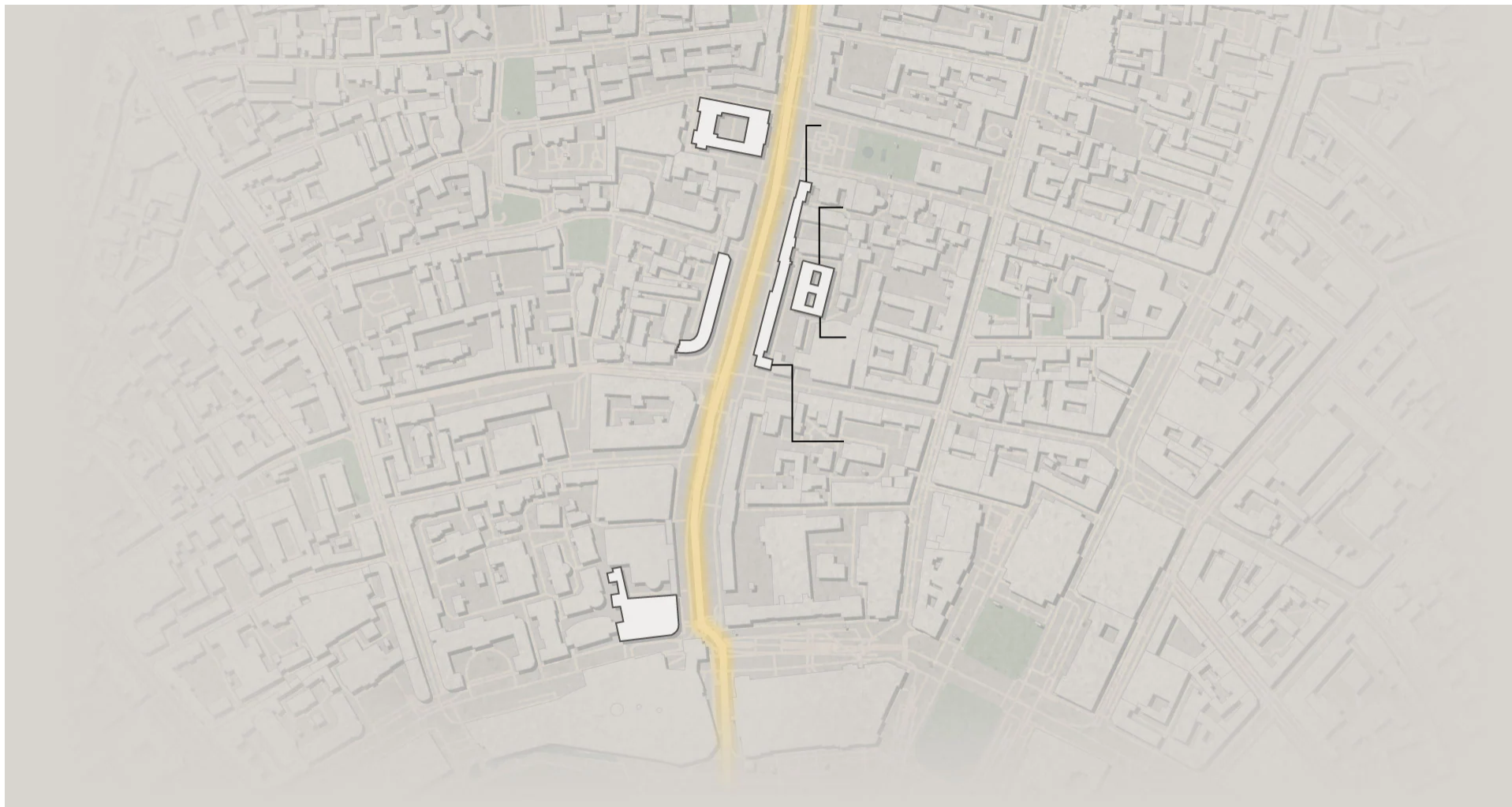


A view of Tverskaya Street from a top floor of the Hotel National in 1980, and in August. The street's changes through the decades encompass the shifts in everyday life from the Soviet Union in the 1920s to Russia today. (Photos by RGAKFD and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

In the 1990s, Tverskaya embodied the fast-money excesses of the post-Soviet free-for-all. In later years, it was packed with hopeful pro-democracy marchers. And now, under President Vladimir Putin, it is a symbol of his dreams of reviving Russia as a great power, reliving past glories and crushing any opposition to his rule.

Join a tour of Moscow's famed Tverskaya Street.

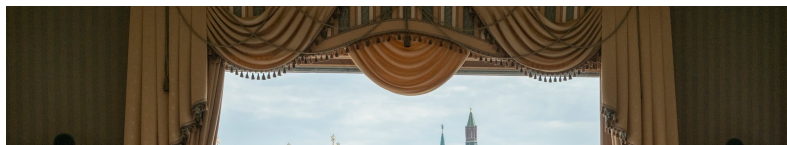


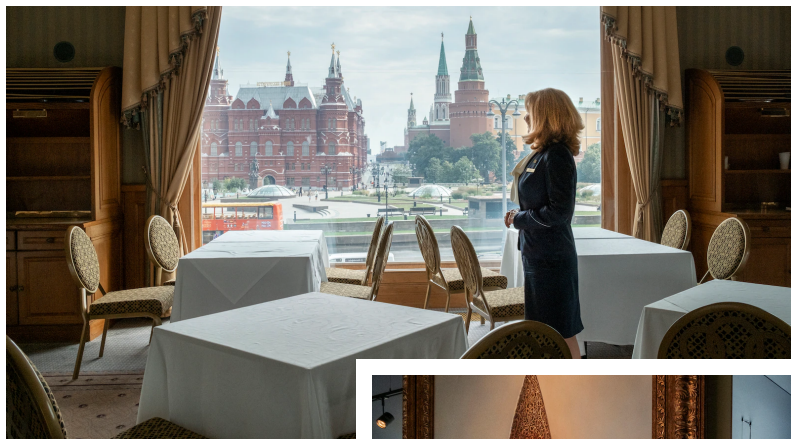


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The window in Room 107 at the Hotel National faces Red Square and the Kremlin. It offers a perfect view of Lenin's tomb — fitting, since he was Room 107's most famous guest.

The Kremlin was damaged during the Russian Revolution in 1917. So Lenin and his wife moved into Room 107 for seven days in March 1918, making the hotel the first home of the Soviet government.







The Hotel National in Moscow, from top: Artwork in the Socialist Realist style — which artists were ordered to adopt in the 1930s — still adorns the hotel; Elena Pozolotina has worked at the hotel since 1995; the hotel, which contains a restaurant, was built in 1902; the National has hosted notable guests, including Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin, then-Sen. Barack Obama (D-III.) and actor Jack Nicholson. (Photos by Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

The National, built in 1902 during the era of Imperial Russia, also accommodated other Soviet leaders, including Leon Trotsky and Felix Dzerzhinsky, chief of the secret police. The building continued to be used by the Soviet government as a hostel for official party delegates and was renamed First House of Soviets in 1919.

Guests can now stay in the same room Lenin did for about \$1,300 a night. In

more recent years, the hotel has hosted notable guests including Barack Obama (when he was a senator) and actor Jack Nicholson.

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“This hotel feels a little like a museum,” said Elena Pozolotina, who has worked at the National since 1995.

“We have rooms that look onto Tverskaya Street, and we always explain to guests that this is the main street of our city,” Pozolotina said. “This corner of Tverskaya that we occupy, it’s priceless.”

When Soviet leader Joseph Stalin demanded a massive redevelopment of Moscow in 1935, an order came to transform modest Gorky Street into a wide, awe-inspiring boulevard.

Engineer Emmanuel Gendel had the job of moving massive buildings to make way for others. Churches and monasteries were blown up, replaced by newspaper offices and a huge cinema.

The Moscow Central Eye Hospital was sheared from its foundation, rotated 97 degrees, jacked up, hitched on rails and pushed back 20 yards — with surgeons operating all the while, or so official media reported at the time.

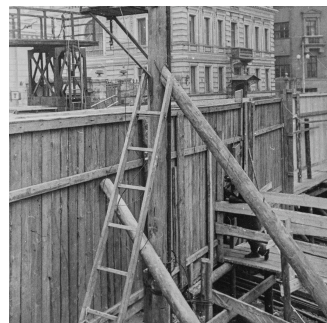




Gendel's daughter, then about 8, proudly stood at a microphone, announcing: "Attention, attention, the building is moving." Tatiana Yastrzhembskaya, Gendel's granddaughter and president of the Winter Ball charity foundation in Moscow, recalls that Gendel extolled communism but also enjoyed the rewards of the elite. He drove a fine car and always brought the family the best cakes and candies, she said.

The largest Gorky Street building Gendel moved was the Savvinskoye Courtyard. The most difficult was the Mossoviet, or Moscow city hall, with a balcony where Lenin had given speeches. The building, the former residence of the Moscow governor general, had to be moved with its basement. The ground floor had been a ballroom without central structural supports.





Moving buildings on Gorky Street in 1940, from left: A mechanic at a control panel regulates the supply of electricity while a house is being moved; a postal worker passes a moving house; a specialist unwinds a telephone cable during a building move to maintain uninterrupted communication; 13 rail tracks were placed under a house, on which 1,200 metal rollers were laid. (Photos by RGAKFD)

Gendel's skills were used all over the U.S.S.R. — straightening towers on ancient mosques in Uzbekistan, inventing a means to drag tanks from rivers during World War II and consulting on the Moscow Metro.

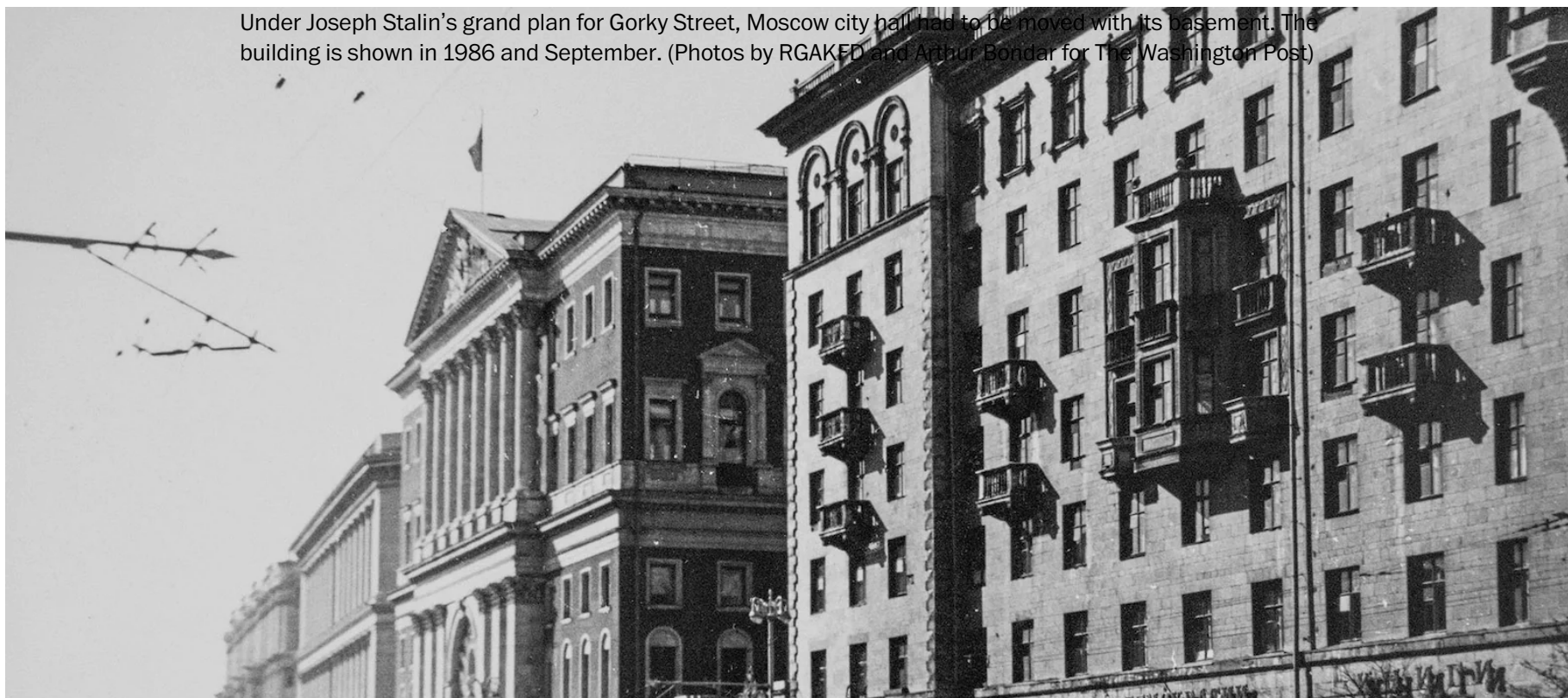
Like many of the Soviet Union's brightest talents, Gendel found that his freedom was tenuous. His ex-wife was called by the KGB internal spy agency in 1937 and asked to denounce him. She refused, and he avoided arrest.

The largest Gorky Street building moved was Savvinskoye Courtyard, seen behind the corner building in this photo from 1938, a year before it was relocated; now, it is tucked behind No. 6 on Tverskaya Street. (Photos by RGA/FP and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)





Under Joseph Stalin's grand plan for Gorky Street, Moscow city hall had to be moved with its basement. The building is shown in 1986 and September. (Photos by RGAKEP and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)





“I believe he was not arrested and sent to the camps because he was a unique expert,” said Yastrzhembskaya. World War II, known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War, interrupted the Master Plan for Gorky Street.

In the 1930s, the head of the elite NKVD secret police, Lavrenty Beria, one of the architects of the Stalin-era purges, ordered the construction of a state-owned restaurant, Aragvi, to showcase food from his home republic of Georgia.

One night, NKVD agents descended in several black cars on a humble Georgian canteen in Moscow that Beria had once visited. The agents ordered the chef, Longinoz Stazhadze, to come with them. The feared NKVD was a precursor to the KGB.

Stazhadze thought he was being arrested, his son Levan told Russian media. He was taken to Beria, who said that he had agreed with “the Boss” (Stalin) that Stazhadze would run Aragvi. Stazhadze had grown up a peasant, sent to work in a prince’s kitchens as a boy.





The Aragvi restaurant was a favorite of the secret police after it opened in 1938. Nugzar Nebieridze was the head chef at Aragvi when it relaunched in 2016. (Courtesy of Nugzar Nebieridze)

Aragvi opened in 1938. It was only for the gilded set, a reminder that the “Soviet paradise” was anything but equitable. The prices were astronomical. It was impossible to get a table unless the doorman knew you or you could pay a hefty bribe.

Aragvi, at No. 6 Tverskaya, was a favorite of the secret police; government officials; cosmonauts and pilots; stars of theater, movies and ballet; directors; poets; chess masters. Beria reputedly dined in a private room. Poet Sergei Mikhalkov said he composed the lyrics of the Soviet national anthem while

sitting in the restaurant in 1943.

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It was privatized in the 1990s and struggled, before closing in 2002. It reopened in 2016 after a \$20 million renovation. But the new Aragvi closed abruptly in 2019 amid reports of a conflict between its owner and the building managers.

“You put your entire soul into cooking,” said the former head chef, Nugzar Nebieridze, 59, celebrated for his khinkali, a meaty dumpling almost the size of a tennis ball. He was devastated to find himself unemployed. But other doors opened. He now prefers to travel, giving master classes around Russia.

On March 6, 1953, the day after Stalin died of a stroke, an estimated 2 million Muscovites poured onto the streets. They hoped to catch a glimpse of his body, covered with flowers and laid out in the marbled Hall of Columns near Red Square.

Yulia Revazova, then 13, sneaked from her house with her cousin Valery without telling their parents. As they walked toward Pushkin Square, at one end of Gorky Street, the procession turned into a scene of horror. They saw people falling and being trampled. Some were crushed against metal fences. Valery, who was a few years older, grabbed Yulia by the hand and dragged her out of the crowd.





In March 1953, Soviet officials, including Nikita Khrushchev and Lavrenty Beria, followed the coffin of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin in a procession in Moscow. (Mondadori Portfolio/Getty Images)

“He held my hand really tight and never let it go, because it was pure madness,” she recalled recently. “It took us four or five hours to get out of there. People kept coming and coming. I couldn’t even call it a column; it was just an uncontrollable mass of people.”

“I still have this feeling, the fear of massive crowds,” added Revazova, 82. “To this day, if I see a huge group of people or a really long line, I just cross the street.”

Neither Revazova nor her cousin knew about Stalin’s repressions.

“People were crying. I saw many women holding little handkerchiefs, wiping away tears and wailing,” she recalled. “That’s the psychology of a Soviet person. If there is no overarching figure above, be it God or Lenin, life will come crashing down. The era was over, and there was fear. What will we do without Stalin?”

Officials never revealed how many people died that day. The Soviet-approved archival footage of the four days of national mourning showed only orderly marches and memorials.

The Soviet culture minister, the steely Yekaterina Furtseva, was nicknamed Catherine the Third, after the forceful Russian Empress Catherine the Great. Furtseva destroyed writers, artists or anyone else who challenged Soviet ideas. She lived at an elite 1949 apartment building for government officials at No. 9 — an ultra-prestigious address with a view of the Kremlin.

Furtseva, a former small-town weaver, made sure that No. 9 was only for the cream of party officials and other notables, such as famous Soviet actress Natalia Seleznyova, scientists, conductors and architects.

Riding the coattails of Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, Furtseva was the only woman in the Politburo and later became the Soviet Union's cultural gatekeeper despite her provincial sensibilities. She once infamously mixed up a symphony with an opera, and critics were quick to notice.



In the late 1940s, No. 9 was being constructed; today, the building is home to apartments, shops and offices.
(Photos by RGA KFD and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

“She had little in common with the artistic leaders of her country except a liking for vodka,” Norwegian painter Victor Sparre wrote in his 1979 book on the repression of dissident Soviet writers, “The Flame in the Darkness.”

Furtseva was famous for previewing performances and declaring anyone even subtly critical of Soviet policies as being anti-state. Director Yuri Lyubimov described one such visit to Moscow’s Taganka Theater in 1969, when she turned up wearing diamond rings and an astrakhan coat. She banned the play “Alive,” depicting a cunning peasant’s struggle against the collective farm system. She “was livid, she kept shouting,” he told L’Alternative magazine in 1984. She stormed out, warning him she would use her influence, “up to the highest levels,” against him.

He was expelled from the party and in 1984 was stripped of his citizenship. She vehemently denounced Solzhenitsyn, and banned the Bolshoi Ballet’s version of “Carmen” in 1967 over prima ballerina Maya Plisetskaya’s sensual performance and “un-Soviet” costumes that did not cover enough leg.

“The ballet is all erotica,” she told the dancer. “It’s alien to us.” But Plisetskaya, whom Khrushchev once called the world’s best dancer, fought back. The ballet went on with some excisions (the costumes stayed) and became a legend in the theater’s repertoire.

Furtseva was nearly felled by scandal in 1974, ordered to repay \$80,000 spent building a luxurious dacha, or country home, using state labor. She died months

later.

The Nobel Prize-winning Solzhenitsyn exposed the Soviet system's cruelty against some of its brightest minds, trapped in the gulag, or prison camps.

Solzhenitsyn was given eight years of hard labor in 1945 for privately criticizing Stalin, then three years of exile in Kazakhstan, a Soviet republic at the time. His books were banned. After release from exile in 1956, he was allowed to make only 72-hour visits to the home of his second wife, Natalia, at 12 Gorky St., Apt. 169. Solzhenitsyn had to live outside the city.

“People knew that there were camps, but not many people, if any, knew what life was like in those camps. And he described it from the inside. He had been there himself, and that was shocking to a lot of people,” said Natalia Solzhenitsyna during a recent interview at the apartment, which became a museum in 2018.

“Many people say that he did make a contribution to the final fall of the Soviet Union.”

Solzhenitsyn, who died in 2008, called Russia “the land of smothered opportunities.” He wrote that it is always possible to live with integrity. Lies and

evil might flourish — “but not through me.”

The museum displays tiny handwritten copies of Solzhenitsyn’s books, circulated secretly; film negatives of letters smuggled to the West; and beads made of compacted bread that he used to memorize poems in prison.

“He spent a lot of time here with his children. We were always very busy. And we just enjoyed ourselves — being together,” Solzhenitsyna said. They had three sons.







No. 12 Gorky St., from top: Natalia Solzhenitsyna lived in the apartment for years, and her husband, Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn, was allowed only short visits; the site now houses a museum displaying items connected to him, such as negatives containing a copy of a novel he wrote; another exhibit includes Solzhenitsyn's clothes from when he was sent to the gulag and beads made of compacted bread that he used to memorize poems; the Nobel Prize-winning writer's desk is featured at the museum. (Photos by Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

Because of KGB bugs, if the couple were discussing something sensitive, they wrote notes to each other, and then destroyed them. Two KGB agents usually roosted in the stairwell on the floor above, with two more on the floor below.

“The Soviet authorities were afraid of him because of his popularity among intellectuals, writers, people of culture and the intelligentsia.”

Her favorite room is decked with black-and-white photos of dissidents sent to the gulag, the Soviet Union’s sprawling system of forced labor camps. “It’s dedicated to the invisibles,” she said, pointing out friends.

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Sweden planned to award Solzhenitsyn's 1970 literature prize in the Gorky Street apartment, but the writer rejected a secret ceremony. A Swedish journalist in Moscow, Stig Fredrikson, was Solzhenitsyn's smuggler. He carried Solzhenitsyn's Nobel lecture on tightly rolled film disguised as a battery in a transistor radio, and he took other letters to the West and transported photos taped to his back.

"I felt that there was a sense of unfairness that he was so isolated and so persecuted," Fredrikson said in a recent interview. "I got more and more scared and more and more afraid every time I met him."

In 1971, the Soviet Union allegedly tried to poison Solzhenitsyn using a secret nerve agent, leaving him seriously ill. Early 1974 was tense. The prosecutor subpoenaed him. State newspapers railed against him.

The morning of Feb. 12, 1974, the couple worked in their study. In the afternoon, he walked his 5-month-old son, Stepan, in the yard below.

"He came back here, and literally a minute later, there was a ring at the door. There were eight men. They immediately broke the chain and got in," his widow said. "There was a prosecutor in his prosecutor's uniform, two men in plainclothes, and the rest were in military uniform. They told him to get dressed."

"We hugged and we kept hugging for quite a while," she recalled. "The last thing

he told me was to take care of the children.”

He was deported to West Germany. The couple later settled in Vermont and set up a fund to help dissident writers, using royalties from his book “The Gulag Archipelago.” About 1,000 people still receive money from the fund, according to Solzhenitsyna.

When the writer and his wife returned to Russia in 1994, they traveled across the country by train. Thousands of people crushed into halls to hear him speak.

Solzhenitsyn abhorred the shock therapy and unchecked capitalism of the 1990s and preferred Putin’s tough nationalism. He died of heart failure at 89 in August 2008, five months after a presidential election in which Putin switched places with the prime minister, Dmitry Medvedev, in a move that critics saw as a ploy to get around constitutional term limits.

Behind a grand Stalin-era apartment block at 6 Gorky St. sits an ornate 1907 building famous for its facade, art nouveau glazed blue tiles, elegant arches and baroque spires. Once a monastery dormitory, it was a staple of pre-Soviet postcards from Moscow. But in November 1939, the 26,000-ton building was put on rails and pushed back to widen the street.

Linguists Lev and Raisa Kopelev lived in Apt. 201 on the top floor. Their spacious dining room became a favored haven for Moscow's intelligentsia from the 1950s to the 1980s.



During the Tverskaya Street reconstruction, the Savvinskoye building, where Apt. 201 was located, was pushed back into the yard and blocked by this Stalin-era apartment block, shown in 1966 and today. (Photos by RGA KFD and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

“People gathered all the time — to talk. In this apartment, like many other kitchens and dining rooms, at tables filled more often than not with vodka, herring and vinaigrette salad, feasts of thought took place,” said Svetlana Ivanova, Raisa’s daughter from another marriage, who lived in the apartment for nearly four decades.

Solzhenitsyn and fellow dissident Joseph Brodsky were Kopelev family friends, as were many other artists, poets, writers and scientists who formed the backbone of the Soviet human rights movement of the 1960s.

As a writer and dissident, Kopelev had turned his back on the Communist Party and a prestigious university position. The onetime gulag prisoner inspired the character Lev Rubin in Solzhenitsyn’s novel “In the First Circle,” depicting the fate of arrested scientists.

“The apartment was a special place for everyone. People there were not afraid to speak their mind on topics that would be considered otherwise risky,” Ivanova said. “A new, different spirit ruled in its walls.”

The Eliseevsky store at No. 16 was a landmark for 120 years — born in czarist Russia, a witness to the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, a survivor of wars, and a bastion during eras of shortages and plenty. It closed its doors in April.

Eliseevsky fell on hard times during the coronavirus pandemic, as international

tourists dwindled and Russians sought cheaper grocery-shopping alternatives.

In the palace-like interior, two chandeliers hang from an ornate ceiling. Gilt columns line the walls. The front of the store, looking out at Tverskaya Street, has a row of stained glass.

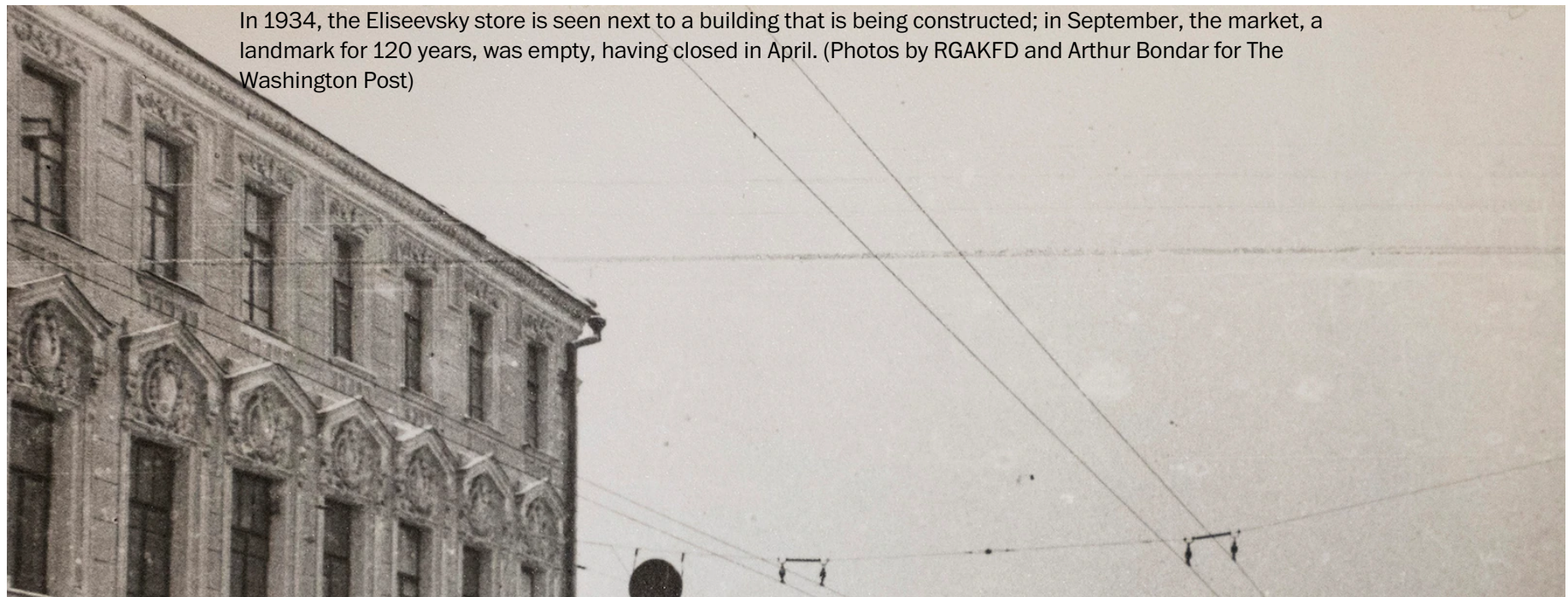


The Eliseevsky store, which opened in 1901, is seen in April, with a few customers and some archival photos, as it prepared to close as an economic victim of the coronavirus pandemic. (Photos by Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

Denis Romodin, a historian at the Museum of Moscow, said Eliseevsky is one of only two retail spaces in Moscow with such pre-revolutionary interiors. But Eliseevsky's level of preservation made it "one of a kind," he said.

The building was once owned by Zinaida Volkonskaya, a princess and Russian cultural figure in the 19th century. She remodeled the house into a literary salon whose luminaries included Russia's greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin.

St. Petersburg merchant Grigory Eliseev opened the market in 1901. It quickly became a hit among Russian nobility for its selection of European wines and cheeses.





The Eliseevsky store on Tverskaya Street is seen at night in the 1990s; the nighttime view today is different.
(Photos by RGA/KFD and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)





Romodín said it was Russia's first store with price tags. Before Eliseevsky, haggling was the norm. And it was also unique in having innovative technology for the time: electric-powered refrigerators and display cases that allowed goods to be stored longer.

Even in the Soviet Union's hungriest years, the 1930s famine, Eliseevsky stocked pineapples.

"One could find outlandish delicacies here, which at that time seemed very exotic," Romodin said. "It was already impossible to surprise Muscovites with wine shops. But a grocery store with luxurious interiors, and large for that time, amazed and delighted Muscovites."

In 1989, in a dusty government office by a corner of Pushkin Square, three young artists threw off decades of suffocating state control and opened the Soviet Union's first independent art gallery.

That April, Yevgeny Mitta and two fellow students, Aidan Salakhova and Alexander Yakut, opened First Gallery. At the time, the Soviet Union was opening up under policies including glasnost, which gave more room for public debate and criticism.

Artists were ordered to adopt the Socialist Realist style in 1934, depicting scenes such as happy collective farmworkers. Expressionist, abstract and avant-garde art was banned. From the 1970s, underground art exhibitions were the only outlets to break the Soviet-imposed rules.





The First Gallery, from top: Yevgeny Mitta, Aidan Salakhova and Alexander Yakut opened the Soviet Union's first independent art gallery in 1989 and received media attention; Mitta works on a painting that he displayed at his gallery; Mitta recalled recently that he "felt we had to make something new"; an undated photo of Mitta at his gallery in Soviet times. (Photos by Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post and courtesy of Yevgeny Mitta)

“I just felt we had to make something new,” recalled Mitta, 58, who kept his interest in contemporary expressionism a secret at a top Moscow art school in the 1980s.

“It was like nothing really happened in art history in the 20th century, like it stopped,” he said. “The Socialist Realism doctrine was invented and spread to the artists as the only one, possible way of developing paintings, films and literature.”

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, artists had to “learn how to survive, what to do, how to work and make a living,” he said.

In the Soviet Union's final years, a mania raged for all things Western. Estée Lauder opened the first Western-brand shop on Gorky Street in 1989, after meeting Raisa Gorbachev, the wife of reformist Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, in December 1988.

The Soviet Union's first McDonald's, located across Pushkin Square on Gorky Street, opened on Jan. 31, 1990 — a yellow-arched symbol of Gorbachev's perestroika economic reforms. Pizza Hut opened later that year. (In 1998, Gorbachev starred in a commercial for the pizza chain.)

Karina Pogosova and Anna Patrunina were cashiers at the McDonald's on opening day. The line stretched several blocks. Police officers stood watch to

keep it organized.



The Soviet Union's first McDonald's opened in 1990 and eager customers lined up to enter; Karina Pogossova, left, and Anna Patrunina were cashiers at the fast-food restaurant on Gorky Street then, and they are senior executives with the company today. (Photos by Peter Turnley/Corbis/VCG/Getty Images and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

“The atmosphere was wonderful. The first day I had to smile the entire day and my face muscles hurt,” Patrunina said. “This is not a joke. Russians do not smile in general, so we were not used to smiling at all, not to mention for more than

eight hours straight.”

Pogosova and Patrunina were students at the Moscow Aviation Institute when they learned McDonald’s was hiring through an ad in a Moscow newspaper. Interview questions included: “How fast can you run 100 meters?” It was to gauge if someone was energetic enough for the job.

Pogosova and Patrunina are still with the company today, as senior vice president of development and franchising and vice president of operations, respectively.

“I thought that this is the world of opportunities and this new world is coming to our country, so I must be in this new world,” Patrunina said.

The smiling staff wasn’t the only culture shock for customers. Some had never tried the fountain sodas that were available. They were unaccustomed to food that wasn’t eaten with utensils. The colorful paper boxes that Big Macs came in were occasionally saved as souvenirs.

McDonald’s quickly became a landmark on the street.

“I remember very well that the street and the entire city was very dark and McDonald’s was like an island of light with bright signage,” Pogosova said. “The street started to change after McDonald’s opened its first restaurant there.”

The end of the Soviet Union uncorked Moscow's wild 1990s. Some people made instant fortunes by acquiring state-owned enterprises at throwaway prices. Rules were being written on the fly. The city was pulsing with possibilities for those with money or those desperate to get some.

"It was easy to get drunk on this," said Alex Shifrin, a former Saatchi & Saatchi advertising executive from Canada who lived in Moscow from the mid-1990s until the late 2000s.

It all was on full display at Night Flight, Moscow's first nightclub, opened by Swedish managers in 1991, in the final months of the Soviet Union, at Tverskaya 17. The club introduced Moscow's nouveau elite to "face control" — who merits getting past the rope line — and music-throbbing decadence.

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The phrase “standing on Tverskaya” made its way into Russian vernacular as the street became a hot spot for prostitutes. Toward the end of the 2000s, Night Flight had lost its luster. The club scene in Moscow had moved on to bigger and bolder venues.

Decades before, No. 17 had been famous as the building with the dancer: a statue of a ballerina, holding a hammer and sickle, placed atop the cupola during Stalin’s building blitz.

The statue of a ballerina, holding a hammer and sickle, could be seen atop the building at No. 17 in this 1943 photo; today, the dancer is missing. (Photos by RGA KFD and Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)







Muscovites nicknamed the building the House Under the Skirt.

“The idea was to have Gorky Street as a museum of Soviet art. The statues represented a dance of socialism,” art historian Pavel Gnilorybov said. “The ballerina was a symbol of the freedom of women and the idea that, before the revolution, women were slaves. It is as if she is singing an ode to the regime.”

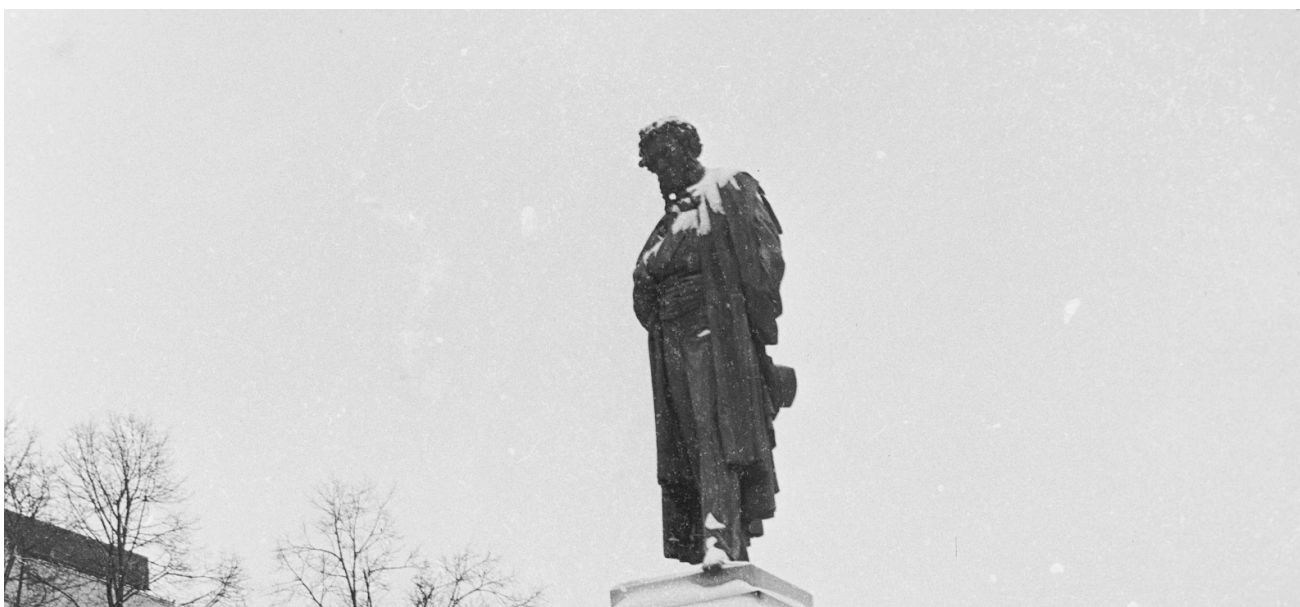
The crumbling statues were removed by 1958. People forgot them. Now a group

of Muscovites, including Gnilorybov, are campaigning for the return of the ballerina.

“It’s an idea that we want to give the city as a gift. It’s not political,” he said. “It’s beautiful.”

Pushkin Square has been Moscow's favorite meeting place for friends, lovers and political demonstrations.

In November 1927, Trotskyist opponents of Stalin marched to the 27th House of Soviets at one end of Tverskaya Street, opposite the Hotel National, in one of the last public protests against the Soviet ruler.





A celebration to say goodbye to winter at Pushkin Square in February 1987. (Igor Stomakhin)



A night view in 1959 of Pushkin Square, a favorite meeting place for many. (RGAKFD)

In December 1965, several dozen dissidents gathered in Pushkin Square to protest the trials of two writers. It became an annual event. People would gather just before 6 p.m. and, on the hour, remove their hats for a minute.

In 1987, dissidents collected signatures at Pushkin Square and other locations calling for a memorial to those imprisoned or killed by the Soviet state. The movement evolved into Memorial, a leading human rights group. Memorial was declared a “foreign agent” in 2016 under Putin’s sweeping political crackdowns.



In January 2018, left, and January 2021, right, protesters gathered at Pushkin Square. (Photos by Arthur Bondar for The Washington Post)

Protests in support of opposition leader Alexei Navalny were held at Pushkin Square earlier this year. And it is where communists and liberals rallied on a rainy September night to protest 2021 parliamentary election results that gave a landslide win to Putin's United Russia party despite widespread claims of fraud.

Nearly 30 years after the fall of the U.S.S.R., Putin's Russia carries some echoes of the stories lived out in Soviet times — censorship and repressions are returning. Navalny was poisoned by a nerve agent in 2020 and later jailed. Many

opposition figures and independent journalists have fled the country. The hope, sleaze and exhilaration of the 1990s have faded. Tverskaya Street has settled into calm stagnation, waiting for the next chapter.

Arthur Bondar contributed to this report.

Correction: A map accompanying this article incorrectly spelled the first name of a former Soviet leader. He is Vladimir Lenin, not Vladmir Lenin. The map has been corrected.